



Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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APPLE EVADED £14bn. AND THE OTHERS?



TAX THE BILLIONAIRES!

The EU, after a long investigation, found on 30 August that Apple has evaded \$13 billion (£10 billion) in taxes.

That's just Apple. The EU has also ordered Starbucks to pay €30 million to the Netherlands, and is likely to order Amazon to pay €400 million to Luxemburg. And then there's Google. And all the other tax-dodging billionaire corporations and their tax-dodging billionaire owners.

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Junior doctors' strikes in October



Strikes for September suspended but October, November and December strikes still on.

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Tories at odds on Brexit



Theresa May says "Brexit means Brexit", but what does that mean?

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LGBT rights in the labour movement



Peter Tatchell on how we won LGBT rights in the labour movement.

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Join Labour!
Revolutionaries and the Labour Party: a reply to Luke Akehurst.

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Links between Brexit and the Harlow murder

By Charlotte Zalens

On Saturday 27 August Arek Jozwik, a Polish national living in Harlow, Essex, was attacked by a large group and beaten to death.

Six teenagers aged 15-16 have been arrested in connection with the murder.

On Friday 2 September after a vigil organised by the Polish community and attended by thousands, two more Polish men were attacked. It seems likely that these attacks were racially motivated.

Some have linked the attacks to the rise in anti-migrant sentiment after the Brexit vote — Harlow voted 3:1 to leave the EU. Clearly not all people with xenophobic and racist ideas go out and beat people up, and not everyone in Harlow who voted for Brexit is racist. But endless tabloid headlines attacking migrants, with both Tory and Labour MPs peddling anti-migrant rhetoric, and a community suffering from cuts, is a potentially deadly mix. Brexit has brought all this to a head.

Some local activists have expressed anger, particularly at the local MP's comment that the killers "had come from the sewers".

In 2010 The Stow, where the murder happened, had the highest recorded level of anti-social behaviour in the south-East. Many residents are frustrated that a series of problems they have been protesting about for years are only just being noticed by both the press and their MP.

Those responsible for making cuts and peddling anti-migrant ideas are now bemoaning a situation they helped create.



Brazil's capitalists call for shock treatment

By Rhodri Evans

Brazil's stock exchange chief Edemir Pinto said on 31 August: "We are hoping for a recovery in the capital markets and a 'shock of capitalism' in the next two years".

The country's Senate had just completed the impeachment and removal from office of Workers' Party president Dilma Rousseff.

Rousseff is appealing to the Supreme Court, but with poor chances. For now her former vice-president, Michel Temer of the PMDB party, holds office until the



Michel Temer

next presidential election in 2018.

Temer will try to deliver the "shock" wanted by Pinto and other capitalists after years of mild Work-

ers' Party reform, but is not strongly placed. He has lost three ministers to corruption charges since provisionally replacing Rousseff in May, and is not popular.

His major policy is an amendment to the constitution to remove the automatic uprating of welfare benefits in line with inflation. The country has been in a deep slump since 2013, and unemployment is still rising.

Lula, the long-standing leader of the Workers' Party and president before Rousseff, has responded by proposing "a new opposition block in Congress" and offering leader-

ship of that block to the PDT, another more-or-less leftist Brazilian party with a history longer but more erratic and populist than the Workers' Party.

Although Lula has been leading in opinion polls for the 2018 presidential election, he has suggested a coalition candidate for president instead of a Workers' Party one.

What is needed is independent mobilisation of Brazil's working class and poor people. The Workers' Party's consistent orientation since the 1990s to cross-class political alliances has cut against such mobilisation.

Millions out against Modi

By Peggy Carter

Millions of workers across India have struck against Prime Minister Modi's plans for public sector privatisation and an inadequate minimum wage increase.

The general strike on Friday 2 September reportedly involved 150 million workers.

The main trade union organisations are fighting for 12 demands, which as well as higher wages also include universal social security, efforts to contain price rises, no increase in the maximum overtime hours, and an extension of labour

protections to more workers in India.

The strike was the fourth one-day general strike in India since 2009. Ahead of the strike 14 workers' organisations met to form an alternative to the central trade union organisations, which they argue are not building a significant fight against the government but instead staging yearly one-day protest strikes that aren't winning.

The alternative coordination of unions, MASA, says it plans to continue to organise action beyond 2 September.

Assad's cronies get rich from war

By Simon Nelson

After a period of rebel advance, the Syrian military and its loyal militias have brought areas of eastern Aleppo back under government control. Rebel districts are again under siege.

Meanwhile the US and Russia have failed to negotiate any meaningful ceasefire and both sides continue to back opposing forces in the civil war.

Barack Obama has again stated that the US has "grave differences with the Russians in terms of both the parties we support but also the process that is required to bring about peace in Syria."

Whilst any deal is meant to coordinate military operations against both Dahr al-Watan and Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, the

prospects of a ceasefire are far more remote. As the US declares, the Assad regime can only "sustain its offensive" with the continued support of Russia, and the current advance of Assad is only made viable due to their support.

The *Guardian* reports that million of dollars of UN contracts are linked to companies associated with the Syrian Government.

Academic Dr Reinoud Leenders argues UN agencies have paid "lucrative procurement contracts to Syrian regime cronies who are known to bankroll the very repression and brutality that caused much of the country's humanitarian needs".

The contracts, which the UN argues at times have to be awarded to state-sanctioned suppliers in order to allow access, show that \$4 mil-

lion has gone to the state-run fuel supplier, an organisation that the EU currently places on its sanction list. \$5 million has been paid to the Syrian Defence Ministry controlled blood bank. The World Health Organisation reports that they have "concrete concerns" as to whether the blood supplies go beyond treating injured military personnel.

As well as dealing with the Syria Trust, a charity run by Asma al-Assad, the First Lady of Syria, and corrupt business people, a further 258 Syrian companies have been awarded contracts. Most of these are able to continue functioning due to their close links with the regime.

Daesh has continued to be heavily targeted by coalition airstrikes with the recent death of Daesh commander Muhammad al-Adnani, considered a major victory.

Daesh has moved against the burqa in the major city they control, Mosul in Iraq.

They say this is because so many Daesh fighters have been killed by women using burqas for concealment. Women now have to unveil to enter certain buildings.

In other Daesh territories the full-face veil is not banned, but compulsory.

American socialist writer to tour UK

Between 23 September and 7 October, American socialist writer Peter Frase will be touring the UK.

Peter is on the editorial board of the magazine *Jacobin*, which has become one of the foremost anti-capitalist, socialist voices in the USA.

Frase will be addressing the themes in his forthcoming book, *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism* and his chapter in the *Jacobin*-published book *ABCs of socialism*.

• For more information on the tour dates and Peter's work go to facebook.com/jacobintour



Container line goes bust

On 31 August the South Korean container shipping company Hanjin, the world's seventh-biggest, declared bankruptcy.

The results are more dramatic than with most bankruptcies: vessels are trapped in ports, cargoes are being seized by creditors, South Korean exporters have their goods held up and are scrambling for new carriers (Hanjing carried 40% of Samsung exports and 20% of LG).

This is the first large container line bankruptcy since United States Lines in 1986, which had built itself a new fleet on the basis of high fuel prices and was wrongfooted when oil prices sagged.

The background is that world trade has grown only very slowly since 2008, while container lines have large new capacity coming onstream that was commissioned before 2008.

Fight the Tories over Brexit

By Colin Foster

There is still a lot to play for in minimising the obstacles to working-class solidarity and to free movement across borders which may come from the 23 June Brexit vote.

New Tory prime minister Theresa May says "Brexit means Brexit", trying to appear resoundingly definite. But still no-one knows what Brexit means or how it might happen.

Even the pro-Brexit media give most space to claims that Brexit has not caused the expected economic damage, claims which may well soon fizzle.

May's more definite statements are:

- Despite the Tory Leave campaigners' shouting, there will be no £350 million extra for the NHS, no end to VAT on fuel bills, and no quick cut-off for British payments into the EU budget.

- Article 50, the formal trigger for exit negotiations with a two-year deadline, will not be activated in 2016 (but she has indicated it will be early in 2017)

- She plans to trigger Article 50 without a parliamentary vote.

- She also rejects an early general election. The Tories currently have a poll lead of about 14%. But under law passed under the 2010 government, she would need a two-thirds parliamentary majority to call an election.

- "A points-based system [for immigration, like Australia, as demanded by many Tory Leave campaigners] will not work and is not an option". For May there are probably two problems here. Australia's "points" immigrants are supplemented by lots of short-term migrant workers on Working Holiday

and 457 (employer-sponsored) temporary visas. And to get market access, openings for British banks to do business in the EU, and a workable deal for British citizens living or wanting to live in the EU, she has to offer something softer than "points".

- However, she has pretty much ruled out the "Norwegian option", membership of the European Economic Area, a sort of three-quarters membership of the EU, opting in to the single market and free movement, but out of the EU's political structures.

The big-business, free-market Adam Smith Institute favoured Leave and then EEA, and many pro-Remain Tories want it too.

The pressure on May to keep Brexit fairly "soft" was signalled by an official Japanese government statement on 4 September. "Japanese businesses with their European headquarters in the UK may decide to transfer their head-office function to continental Europe if EU laws cease to be applicable in the UK after its withdrawal", and Japanese financial institutions may "relocate their operations from the UK to existing establishments in the EU".

At present Britain scoops most



Japanese investment directed to the EU, and that investment is important for British capital.

Owen Smith, the right-wing candidate for Labour leader pretending to be a left-winger, has tried to sound militant on Brexit. Despite more muffled language, Jeremy Corbyn has been clear on the principles here — defending freedom of movement, seeking unity for a social Europe as against the current neo-liberal Europe.

Shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry has said: "The Labour Party is clear: Instead of 'pushing ahead' with Article 50, those negotiations should not be triggered until the Government has put forward a clear plan about what it is seeking to achieve, how it will go about it, and until the public, Parliament, the devolved administrations, London and Gibraltar have given their approval to that plan."

Corbyn has said: "Is there a way of having a European Economic Area agreement, possibly via Norway and other countries? Yeah, there probably is". That leaves unanswered what Labour's attitude will be to a Tory Brexit on definitely non-EEA lines, which May now seems set on.

The 23 June vote implies no democratic duty on Labour to support whatever the Tories make of the undefined "Brexit" mandate, or to rule out a second referendum on a unpopular "Brexit" deal.

Labour should challenge the Tories in parliament over triggering Article 50 with a build-the-barriers Brexit plan; defend freedom of movement; fight the Tories; and work to save and extend labour movement unity across the continent for a social and democratic (workers') Europe, against the current neo-liberal Europe.

The real reason why Keith Vaz is "not fit" to be an MP

By Sacha Ismail

"To choose Wembley Stadium, which is where the Champions League final takes place and where only rock stars perform, shows how special Narendra Modi is to all of us... MPs have just had a pay rise and because I am so excited about this event I will donate my pay rise for November for this great function." Keith Vaz MP, 2015



It is obvious why suspended MP Simon Danzuc, accused of sexual harassment against a teenage applicant to work in his office and of domestic violence, would defend Vaz in the media campaign against the Leicester MP.

However, unlike Danzuc, Vaz is accused of something — consensual sex with adult sex workers — which it is possible to condemn only by descending into a swamp of prudish moralism and homophobic sensationalism.

Keith Vaz is not fit to be a Labour MP. But that has nothing to do with the current media controversy and everything to do with his disgraceful political record.

The left should be criticising Keith Vaz's fawning before the rich and powerful, and his opportunistic record of backing various (and varied) reactionary political forces — not his sex life.

In 1989, shortly after becoming an MP, Vaz promised Salman Rushdie his support against Islamic bigots campaigning to ban his novel *The Satanic Verses* and against threats of violence. A few weeks later he was one of the main speakers at a march of Muslims in Leicester demanding the

banning of the book, describing it as "one of the great days in the history of Islam and Great Britain".

But Vaz's opportunism and chameleon-like political character allow him to associate with anti-Muslim bigots too. Last year he tried to make himself central to the feting of India's far-right Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he visited Britain, ignoring Modi's ultra-reactionary record and his facilitation of harassment and even pogroms against Indian Muslims.

There are various other shocking episodes you could cite.

Vaz is in no sense on the left, not even minimally. Part of the media campaign here is portray him as on the left in order to discredit "Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party". But Vaz should be known for championing the interests of various super-rich capitalists to the point where it gets him in trouble. He is a rich man himself, with many "business interests".

The labour movement must rid itself of the likes of Keith Vaz, but not by having anything to do with the current scandal-mongering.

The biggest opening for some time

On 3 September a meeting of readers of *Solidarity* discussed the ferment in the Labour Party and the leadership election. Gerry Bates reports on some of the conclusions.

Momentum groups are holding bigger meetings, finding new people. Despite the fact that the apparatus has tried to stop local Labour Parties meeting, many of these people want to be active in Labour.

Before the Labour right launched their coup attempt against Corbyn in June, there were people around Momentum, and supporting Corbyn, who saw no real need to be active in the Labour Party.

That has changed. There are still some who have a "Corbyn cult", who project all their political wishes onto the personality of Cor-

byn. But more people understand, or can be got to understand, that real progress depends on transforming the whole labour movement, not just having Corbyn in the leader's job.

Before June, most left-wingers were cautious about reselecting Labour MPs. Now many want to settle accounts with the coup plotters, and they want "workers' MPs on workers' wages".

The party machine has responded with a new wave of expulsions. We need a broad campaign to resist the purge and demand due process.

This is the biggest opening for socialist politics for some time, and all socialists should become active in Momentum, in the Labour Party, and into making Momentum groups active on a ward and CLP level.

They should be good citizens of this movement, but not only that.

There will be pressure on many left-wingers now to become councillors. That will be a mechanism to chew them up and tame them unless it's a matter of a whole council slate committed to defying cuts.

Socialists should raise the questions which the whole movement will have to deal with at the next, or next-but-one, stage.

What kind of government do we want? How do we shift the balance of class forces? What do we propose about the entrenched, unelected, state machine?

Some people in Momentum regard nationalising the banks as extreme, but to be serious about social change we have to explain where the money will come from.

"Policy development" in the Labour Party still tends to be seen in terms of looking to the "leader's office" to come up with good schemes. That needs to be turned round: if the labour movement is to

become a real force for change, it must develop its own policies, through debate at the base and through democratic conferences and votes.

Momentum, too, should have proper democratic structures.

The universities will start back just after the Labour leadership election result is announced. Student Labour clubs can turn themselves into the hubs on campus for left wing discussions, socials, campaigns etc., and levers to help build Young Labour groups in constituencies, while making sure the younger members call the tune there. Developing new young socialists is central.

No transformation of the Labour Party can be thorough or stable if it does not go hand-in-hand with a transformation in the unions, and a thorough democratic transformation and revitalisation which goes beyond backing "left-led" unions

against the others.

Socialists active in the unions should draw people from the new upsurge into activity alongside them. Organised rank-and-file networks in the unions are as yet weak, and industrial disputes are at the lowest level since records began. But the work is essential.

Local Momentum groups and left-wing Labour Party units can establish revitalising links with local union branches. The Labour Party should be turned to being the party which supports strikes.

A radical government policy is fundamentally not possible in a single country. Syriza foundered on that rock.

In arguing for freedom of movement against the Tories' Brexit plans, we must also argue for labour-movement solidarity across borders for a social and democratic (workers') Europe.

Revolutionary versus “democratic socialism”

Sacha Ismail replies to Luke Akehurst on “entryism”.

An article by Luke Akehurst, a prominent and combative Labour right winger, written in October 2015, was recently drawn to my attention.

The article, published on the LabourList website, was about “entryism”, by which Akehurst means the presence of a revolutionary socialist group like Workers’ Liberty within the Labour Party. It has renewed relevance during the current events.

Akehurst merits a reply because, unusually, he at least makes a nod towards rationally discussing the issues, accepting that terms like “Trotskyist” and “entryism” are commonly bandied around on the Labour right with little clarity or attempt at it.

Akehurst tries to prove that AWL is not really part of, and does not really regard itself as part of, the Labour Party. Most of the accusations he cites as proof are simply untrue, all are incoherent.

Akehurst cites the party rule which says “A member of the Party who joins and/or supports a political organisation other than an official Labour group or other unit of the Party... shall automatically be ineligible to be or remain a party member”. As has been widely noted, this either cannot mean what it says — or those with a direct debit to Amnesty International or CND would have to be expelled, to say nothing of Progress or Momentum members. It is a sinister licence for bureaucrats to expel whomever they don’t like.

Or conversely to allow violations by whoever they do like: this month it was revealed that Labour peer David Sainsbury gave £2 million to the Lib Dems last year, but the Party says it will take no action against him.

Yes, Workers’ Liberty was registered with the Electoral Commission until 2015. However, we have not supported any non-Labour candidates since May 2010, when we called for a Labour vote in every constituency except one very safe Labour one (where we stood a candidate). Since then we have without exception supported Labour candidates and argued forcefully against those on the radical left who did not. In fact we have consistently backed a Labour victory in general elections for more than forty years.

Why shouldn’t a socialist organisation be able to change its orientation and become more committed to and active in the Labour Party? There is clear historical precedent.

The Independent Labour Party, which was a founding group of the Labour Party, split away in 1932. It attempted to reaffiliate in 1939 and was refused. It contested parliamentary elections against Labour up to February 1974. In 1975, it decided to redefine itself as a “political pressure group”, Independent Labour Publications. It was explicit that the new ILP continued the old ILP. It was accepted back into Labour, and rightly so. The same approach should apply to Workers’ Liberty as to the ILP.

Far from “entering” the party after Corbyn’s victory last year, the vast majority of our supporters were Labour members substantially before that; and many were members before they became associated with AWL.

Yes, we have a regular publication and a

website. So does Progress (and, on the left, the LRC, which Akehurst graciously doesn’t want to expel). Yes, we have local groups. So does Momentum. If Progress and Labour First don’t, I imagine it is only because they don’t have enough supporters.

The Labour Party was founded by a coalition of unions and socialist organisations, the ILP, the Fabians and the Social Democratic Federation (which saw itself as Marxist). All predated the Labour Party. The notion that the existence of distinct socialist tendencies is alien to Labour’s history implies a total ignorance, in this case presumably pretended ignorance, of how the party came into being.

Contrary to Akehurst’s claim, the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty is not banned.

In 1990, the Labour Party National Executive banned the newspaper *Socialist Organiser*. Labour Party conference voted against an attempt to overturn the ban: a majority of Constituency Labour Parties were for overturning, a majority of union votes against. In 1991 the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty was founded by supporters of *Socialist Organiser*, but from the mid-1990s until 2015, there were no or virtually no expulsions from the party on the basis of association with AWL. Expulsions began only once the war against Corbyn began last summer.

ENTRYISM

Akehurst says that “Entryism doesn’t mean being a very leftwing person who wants to join and change the policies of a more moderate party (or vice versa).”

“It’s a political strategy... where an existing external organisation or party encourages its members or supporters to join another, usually larger, organisation in an attempt to expand their influence... cynical and essentially parasitic in nature — it’s about the smaller party subverting the resources and membership base of the larger one. It’s an inherently dishonest political strategy, as it involves people lying about whether they are members of another party.”

The picture Akehurst has concocted here bears little relationship to the actual activity of Workers’ Liberty supporters in the Labour Party — in which we are a very small minority arguing honestly for our very distinctive ideas and proposals, while supporting the Party’s progress and activities.

It would be much more accurate as a depiction of the cynical hijacking of the political labour movement over the last twenty years by a neo-liberal current, Blairism, which has been dishonest about its aims and is now organising disruptive attacks on the party because it is hostile to the revival of the labour movement under Corbyn.

Akehurst cites the fact Workers’ Liberty has its “own programme, principles and policy” which is against Labour’s rules. Yet all kinds of organisations and currents within the party have their own programmes — as they must in any democratic organisation.

For Akehurst it is really Workers’ Liberty’s particular principles that are the problem. The key Labour aim and value is “democratic socialism”. We cannot be in the party because we “believe in a revolutionary path to socialism”.

Akehurst says that we support “the armed overthrow of parliamentary democracy and its replacement by a dictatorship of the proletariat [and see ourselves] as part of the same revolutionary tradition as the Bolsheviks and Lenin and Trotsky”. Therefore: “Labour isn’t your party because we are a party that believes in a parliamentary and democratic road to socialism.”

Here it is worth noting that one of Labour’s founding affiliates was a Marxist organisation (the SDF), while another had many people within it who saw themselves as revolutionaries (the ILP). Please also note that if Akehurst was consistent he would also campaign to expel individuals who see themselves as being in a revolutionary socialist tradition.

More fundamentally, both the description of Marxists and the self-presentation of the Labour right involved here are dishonest.

By using the archaic term “dictatorship of the proletariat”, Akehurst presumably hopes to strike horror into the hearts of his readers. But what Marx meant when he wrote about the “dictatorship of the proletariat” was the “rule of the waged working class”: neither more nor less. The current social and political set up is the “dictatorship (rule) of the capitalist class”. To wanting to replace the latter with the former, we plead guilty.

Workers’ rule, unlike that of the capitalists, will surely admit openly that it involves the “dictatorship” of a class (until all classes dissolve completely). But it will, on every level, be far more democratic than the system we have now. As Lenin and Trotsky’s comrade Rosa Luxemburg put it:

“Socialist democracy is not something which begins only in the promised land after the foundations of socialist economy are created; it does not come as some sort of Christmas present for the worthy people who, in the interim, have loyally supported a handful of socialist dictators. Socialist democracy begins simultaneously with the beginnings of the destruction of class rule... it is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

“... This dictatorship consists in the manner of applying democracy, not in its elimination, but in energetic, resolute attacks upon the well-entrenched rights and economic relationships of bourgeois society, without which a socialist transformation cannot be accomplished.”

We are “revolutionaries” in two senses. Firstly, we believe that overturning capitalism will require more than simply legal enactments; it will take a mass movement in society, in workplaces and communities as well as at the level of politics, overflowing the blocks and filters and channels of official society. And secondly, we think it very likely that such a movement will come into conflict with the existing state machine — the police, the army, the bureaucratic hierarchy — which will defend capitalism with every means available. History, from the Chilean coup of 1973 to the miners’ strike of 1984-5, certainly suggests that.

There is nothing undemocratic about any of this. In fact it is consistently democratic view of social transformation, a “socialism from below” (if you want to use that term). We are democratic socialists.

What about Parliament? We think that labour movements in history have created, at high points of mobilisation and struggle, more flexible, responsive and meaningfully democratic institutions than the kind of parliamentary system we have in Britain today. That doesn’t mean we are “against parliamentary democracy”. Workers’ councils are in fact a kind of “parliamentary” system, in a sense of a system of elected assemblies. And we want to defend parliamentary democracy against bureaucratic and military subversion, extend its democratic aspects and test it to the limit as a channel for working-class self-assertion.

It is, in fact, the Labour right who over three decades or more have helped shift Parliament closer to a talking shop, with British



democracy more and more hollowed out even by the low historical standards of democracy limited by capitalism (“bourgeois democracy”). Judged by their record, their contempt for parliamentary democracy is second only to their hatred for democracy in the labour movement, currently so spectacularly on display.

“We are a party that believes in a parliamentary and democratic road to socialism”, says Luke Akehurst. So does Tony Blair believe in a parliamentary road to socialism? Does Peter Mandelson? What about Blair’s former director of operations John McTernan, who openly praises privatisation, says he’s glad Thatcher defeated the miners and recently used the pages of the *Daily Telegraph* to call on the Tories to “crush the rail unions and for all”? Who can doubt Blair and all his ilk privately feel the same?

Luke Akehurst, the pretend loyal citizen of the labour movement, has (as far as I can see) said nothing about McTernan’s shameful rant in the *Telegraph*. Just as the right-wing feminists of the Parliamentary Labour Party have refused to take time out of their attacks on the “abuse” and “sexism” of Corbyn and the Labour left to even comment on Owen Smith’s real and regular sexist outbursts or the foul misogynist behaviour of Simon Danzuc.

The key division in today’s labour movement is surely not between “democrats” and “revolutionaries”. There is a division between democrats and anti-democrats in the movement — with, broadly, revolutionary Marxists and reformist “democratic socialists” on one side, and Stalinists, semi-Stalinists and the Labour right (many of whom are ex-Stalinists) on the other. The division to look at would be between those who actually believe in socialism in some sense and those who oppose it.

Or better still, I would suggest: between those who meaningfully adhere to the labour movement, its struggles, its history, its interests and broad values, and neo-liberals of the Blair-Mandelson-McTernan stripe who hate it and want to maintain their dominance over Labour in order keep it down; along with their apologists like Luke Akehurst.

Akehurst appeals to Labour’s “democratic socialists” to help cast out the revolutionary left. In fact those, including Owen Smith supporters, who have minimal loyalty to the labour movement must cast out the likes of McTernan, and demand that the Akehursts help or go too.

“How to Select or Reselect your MP” by David Osland. £4 from www.spokesmanbooks.com



Tax the billionaires!

The EU, after a long investigation, found on 30 August that Apple has evaded \$13 billion (£10 billion) in taxes.

That's just Apple. The EU has also ordered Starbucks to pay €30 million to the Netherlands, and is likely to order Amazon to pay €400 million to Luxembourg. And then there's Google. And all the other tax-dodging billionaire corporations and their tax-dodging billionaire owners.

The worst-off households pay a bigger percentage of income in tax (including VAT and such) than the best-off. In 2011-2, the worst-off 20% were paying 36.6% in tax, the best-off 20% were paying 35.5%, and the average take was 34.6%.

The NHS, social services, libraries, and welfare benefits are all being squeezed, with the excuse that taxes don't bring in enough income.

The PCS, the tax workers' union, estimates that £25 billion is lost annually in tax avoidance and a further £70 billion in tax evasion

by large companies and wealthy individuals.

The billionaire corporations and their billionaire owners should be taxed to fund social provision. Even better — since they'll always eventually find ways to get round the best tax rules — transnational giants like Apple should be taken into public ownership. Best would be a form of multinational public ownership, for example ownership by the EU of all Apple operations in Europe.

At present there's a more basic problem. The governments don't even *want* to tax the billionaire corporations heavily. The Tories talk of reducing corporate tax rates at the same time as they continue cuts.

The Irish government, offered a tax payment that could revolutionise its rickety finances, has said no thanks. It has vowed to appeal against the EU ruling that Apple should pay it maybe \$19 billion (£14 billion) in back taxes plus interest, the equivalent of the country's whole public health budget.

That shows the priorities which all capitalist states, and especially the smaller ones,

have adopted in the era of neoliberalism.

Where capitalist states used to be concerned to build integrated national industrial complexes, today their priority is to make their territory the most congenial for free-flowing global capital to perch in.

The EU found that Apple had been booking all its European revenues in Ireland, and then dividing its profits into two streams. One stream was credited to Apple Ireland, and taxed at Ireland's low rate of 12.5%. The other stream was credited to an "Apple head office" which the Irish authorities defined as a "stateless company" and therefore not taxable.

The arrangement has been going since 1991, but the EU could decide only on the last ten years; for those years, the EU says Apple should pay the Irish government \$13 billion in back taxes, possibly \$19 billion including interest.

It's a huge amount, but very affordable for Apple.

Apple has financial reserves of \$215 billion,

stashed out of reach of tax people. It made profits of \$53 billion in 2015. It plans to spend \$47 billion in the next few years on "buy-backs", i.e. on enabling shareholders to cash in their shares.

In the meantime, parcellisation of capitalist states helps the multinationals. The more the capitalist world is divided into smaller states, many of them small even compared with individual multinationals, the more they are driven to compete with each to capture shares of the world's huge flows of finance and investment.

The EU had the courage to deliver the tax bill, and the US has one of the highest corporate tax rates in the world, not because they are left-wing but because they are bigger.

One of the reasons for fighting to minimise Brexit is that a cordoned-off British capitalist state will serve transnational capital even more slavishly than the current regime.

TORIES OUT
AUSTERITY HAS FAILED

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION | SUNDAY 2 OCTOBER 2016

**AT THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE, BIRMINGHAM
ASSEMBLE 11:30AM, VICTORIA SQUARE, B1 1BD
CALLED BY THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY & MIDLANDS TUC
WWW.THEPEOPLESASSEMBLY.ORG.UK**



Let's talk about socialism



"Socialism, a word not used much in the last 15 years," so said shadow chancellor John McDonnell at an Ealing, West London for Corbyn rally on 31 August.

McDonnell went on to say that the election of Jeremy Corbyn would represent something different from what has gone before. We would get a leader that would break the mould from those, "who have never implemented socialism."

Whilst we wouldn't agree entirely with McDonnell's definition of socialism and

how we can defeat the capitalist world, the election of Jeremy Corbyn and the current leadership campaign have put the ideas and discussion of socialism straight back on the agenda.

Workers' Liberty believe now more than ever we must Stand Up For Socialism and organise to change the world.

A strong and vibrant working class and labour movement is the force that can turn the tide against the last 30 years of defeat.

We want to start discussions with student and worker activists about our book *Can Socialism Make Sense* and alongside our speaker tour with US writer Peter Frase, author of *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism*.

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Democracy, direct action and socialism is a debate between Michael Foot, a key figure of the Labour left during the 80s, and Sean Matgamna. In the context of the miners' battle against the state the debate discusses issues such as extra-parliamentary action, the role of the Labour Party and Labour left, the use of direct action, the role of the police and the state, and the real meaning of democracy.



Buy both books for £15 (+£3 postage)
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Workers' Liberty has a range of books including: *Why Socialist Feminism?*, *Class against class: The Miners' Strike*, *In an Era of Wars and Revolutions: American socialist cartoons*, *Gramsci in context*, *Working class politics and anarchism*, and two books in our *Fate of the Russian Revolution* series.

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Changing attitudes,

Peter Tatchell spoke at Workers' Liberty's Ideas for Freedom event (7-10 July) about the struggle to win the labour movement to recognition of LGBT rights.

The 1967 Sexual Offences Act (which partially decriminalised sex between men in private) was a very partial limited reform but nevertheless progress all the same.

However, many Labour MPs opposed that legislation and as far as I know no trade unions supported it. Many other social groups did support law reform in 1967, but no trade union, and even the Society of Socialist Lawyers took a hostile view. Socialist lawyers did begrudgingly accept that there should be some sort of decriminalisation but they also advocated increased policing and repression of the LGBT community to ensure that this "contagion does not spread." Even here there was a lot of deep seated homophobia.

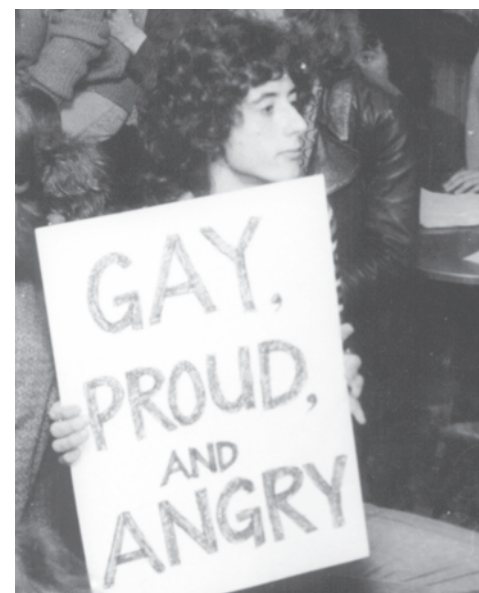
I remember Allan Horsfall, one of the great LGBT pioneers in the 50s and 60s. He set up the first LGBT organisation by and for LGBT people, the North West Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform, which became the Campaign for Homosexual Equality.

Horsfall was a Labour councillor in Nelson in Lancashire. He tried to get his local party to support the Wolfenden proposals [which led to the 1967 Act] and he was shunned and treated as a pariah. That was the story around the country.

In 1970 the Gay Liberation Front was formed in London and that was a watershed moment. For the first time you had an LGBT movement that was run and led by LGBT people, and where coming out was the cornerstone. The words equality never passed our lips; we weren't interested in equality, in the status quo, we wanted to transform society and we had a social transformation agenda rather than an equal rights agenda.

The GLF also had the concept of "united we stand divided we fall". We had and demonstrated solidarity with other liberation movements — the Irish freedom movement, the women's liberation movement and the black rights movement in particular.

In 1971, when the Conservative government introduced the Industrial Relations Act to constrain the rights and powers of the trade unions, there was a huge march in London of maybe over 250,000 people. The GLF



Peter Tatchell at a GLF protest

went along to show our solidarity but unfortunately the solidarity was not reciprocated.

Not everyone, but a lot of trade unionists, shouted homophobic insults, the group were pelted with projectiles, beer cans, banner poles — all from trade unionists even though the GLF had gone in solidarity to support the trade union movement against the Tories!

At that time there were no left wing groups that supported LGBT rights and no trade unions. Some of the left groups were openly hostile. They would say homosexuality was a product of degenerate capitalism, that homosexuality was a bourgeois perversion and that homosexuality would disappear in a pure socialist society. All those kind of ideas were straight out of the Stalin textbook from the 1930s.

THE LEFT

LGBT people often had a really hostile treatment within those left groups.

When members of what was then the International Socialists (now SWP) tried to organise an LGBT group, they were forbidden by the leadership and were put into a position where they had to leave. The Communist Party endorsed the traditional Soviet Bloc line that homosexuality was anti-socialist and so on.

The GLF continued to show solidarity with other causes. We went on Troops Out (of Northern Ireland) protests in 1971, 72 and 73. The GLF got quite a hostile reaction from Irish groups, from trade unionists and again from left groups.

When the Mangrove 9 were on trial in 1971 [black rights activists arrested after clashes with police in West London], the GLF were the only non-black group to stand in solidarity with them at the court. We got very mixed reactions; some black activists welcomed us, others wished we would go away, to many we were an embarrassment.

We supported the struggle against the Greek colonels [military junta 1967-74] and would be abused by Greek activists, who would often call the colonels "pousti", which is the equivalent of "faggot", so there was deep-seated homophobia there.

In 1973 things began to change. John Lloyd, a friend of mine who was also a member of



Alan Horsfall, LGBT pioneer

changing the world



The Gay Liberation Front was irreverent, defiant and left-wing

the Young Communist League (YCL), pioneered and drove a policy within the YCL to support LGBT rights. I would say the response (within the YCL) was not overly supportive, but people seemed to be embarrassed to oppose, so it went through.

Likewise the National Union of Students (NUS) passed a gay rights policy in May 1973. The left groups within the NUS were not overtly hostile but none were overtly supportive. Some individual members did speak up — to their credit — but as party blocs they did not support us.

Then came the World Festival of Youth in 1973 in East Berlin, East Germany. I was amazingly given a delegate pass to go and represent the GLF. This only happened because the organiser of the UK delegation was in the YCL and had pressure put on him by John Lloyd.

Out of 140,000 people who went there I was the only [openly] gay delegate. I planned to lay a pink triangle wreath at Sachsenhausen concentration camp in memory of the gay and bisexual men murdered there. Members of the CPGB and other left groups got wind of this and they doxed me into the Stasi (East German secret police). Can you believe it! This was to stop me from doing what they said would be an embarrassment and a shame to “socialist” East Germany!

A compromise was reached. I did have some supporters including some CP members, and it was agreed that I would be allowed to speak at a youth rights rally on behalf of the British delegation but could not lay the wreath.

Of course when I began speaking about LGBT rights, all the simultaneous translations went dead and the organisers said you must finish and resume your seat please. I said, “No I have been allocated 30 minutes, and I will be speaking for 30 minutes thank you”. Then the Stasi tried to drag me off the platform, but they didn’t succeed! The crowd, which was about 2000 strong, had never seen the East German authorities chal-

lenged like this before and started cheering and clapping and booing the Stasi. In the end I was allowed to speak but the translations were not restored. Then they were, but all references to “gay” were removed.

At the November NUS Conference that year a group of people mainly around the International Socialists (IS) supported a motion to remove key members of the CP who had been involved in blocking me at the festival. This was entirely opportunistic as the IS had never expressed any support for gay rights up until this point. Nevertheless it forced them to come off the fence and support LGBT rights for the first time.

The vote was very narrowly lost. Some of the senior people in the NUS were up for removal from their posts, which had never happened in NUS history. The CP were so embarrassed they soon after made a declaration of support for LGBT rights.



Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners — a turning point in the struggle

The World Youth Festival is a turning point because after that most of the left embraced LGBT rights, the IS, CP and some of the smaller groups followed suit. It was seen that they could not be seen as not supporting this issue rather than an active, positive support for the principles.

ANTI-FASCISM

Later I was involved with the GLF in a small group called Gays against Fascism to support the struggles and battles against the National Front.

We would go along to the protest as openly gay people, sometimes we got support but often people were clearly embarrassed and at times we got overt hostility.

When Tony Whitehead, a gay man, was sacked by BHS in 1976, no trade unions rallied to his support to defend his employment rights. When Susan Shell was sacked by Barking Council in the 1980s, initially no trade unions gave her support. In the 1970s no left groups or trade unions attended LGBT pride parades.

In the 1980s we did get support from Ken Livingstone and the Labour-run Greater London Council. That was really the turning point within the broader labour movement. The leader of the London Council and his team were backing LGBT rights and funding LGBT organisations. Lots of councils followed suit.

Then came the February 1983 Bermondsey by election, which most commentators describe as the dirtiest homophobic election in

Britain during the 20th century. I stood [for Labour] on the most radical gay rights platform of any parliamentary candidate up until that point, but got very little support from key people in the Party. This was partly because I was on the left and also because I was gay and supporting gay rights. I had lots of prominent left wingers who told me it was probably best not to make a

big issue of gay rights. Wait until you’re elected.

I think one of the main reasons I got such a hostile reaction on the doorsteps was because of my support for LGBT rights. As you know, I lost the election but I think that, what happened during the election created such a revulsion in the labour movement and wider society that it strengthened the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights and others who were championing these issues within Labour and the trade union movement. People felt that the election was so disgusting and had gone to such an excess that even people who were not sympathetic or supportive recognised a red line had been crossed. An amazing number of people started to speak out against homophobia that had never done so before.

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners was another really pivotal movement, not only getting the NUM onside, but winning many other trade union and labour movement people. It was not entirely 100%. I was not directly involved in LGSM, but I was involved through Labour and LGBT movement activists in other areas with miners’ solidarity, mainly in Scotland.

Again it was interesting as my support as an openly gay man changed, attitudes as with LGSM in lodges and miners’ clubs.

In the mid 1980s both the TUC and the Labour Party eventually formally adopted LGBT rights as a policy.

The lessons of Bermondsey

By Peter Tatchell

What Fleet Street really objected to [in the February 1983 Bermondsey by-election] was my radical socialism rather than my homosexuality. It merely played on my gayness to discredit my politics.

It is within this context that members of the Bermondsey Labour Party have considered my future as their candidate. It has been their overwhelming view that I should not stand at the general election [of June 1983]. They feel that the falsehood and bigotry of the last 16 months has taken such a strong hold in the minds of so many Bermondsey electors that they could not be erased in the foreseeable future...

I agree that winning back the seat is important, but at what price? There is a lot of talk within the Labour Party about the need for more “suitable” and less “vulnerable” candi-



dates. More “suitable” to whom?

Doesn’t that effectively mean more “suitable” to the yellow press and more in con-

formity with popular prejudices? There are already too many clones from the Labour candidate factory: moderate, middle-class, middle-aged, married, macho and male. If we merely continue to reproduce that traditional stereotype we will never get an adequate representation of working class, women and black MPs — let alone any who are openly gay. Instead of overcoming prejudices, we will end up reinforcing them.

Allowing others to dictate Labour’s choice of candidates is only one step away from allowing them to determine our policies as well.

If we permit ourselves to be bullied and liked and intimidated down that road, we will be colluding with the transformation of Labour into a “second eleven” for the SDP.

• From the *Guardian* 18 April 1983

Ernst Nolte and right-wing anti-Zionism

By Micheál MacEoin

Right-wing German historian Ernst Nolte died on 18 August at the age of 93.

Nolte was born to a Catholic family in Witten, in western Germany, in 1923. He studied with phenomenologist philosopher and Nazi sympathiser Martin Heidegger, who would be a major influence.

Nolte first came to prominence with his 1963 study *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche* (Fascism in Its Epoch, which was translated into English two years later as *The Three Faces of Fascism*). This work downgraded social or class-based explanations of fascism, in favour of an idealist and philosophical approach, in which ideas in the “metapolitical dimension” determined world events.

Taking the form of a comparative analysis of the ideologies of Hitler, Mussolini and the French proto-fascist, Charles Maurras, the book argued that though fascism functioned on the political level as “anti-Marxism” and sociologically in opposition to bourgeois values, it was first and foremost a reaction against “transcendence”, or the spirit of modernity, on the “metapolitical” level.

It would be events in the 1980s, however, which made Nolte notorious.

In June 1986, Nolte wrote in an opinion piece in the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine*



Ernst Nolte

meine Zeitung under the title of ‘Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will’ (‘The past that will not pass away’). In this essay, Nolte argued that it was necessary to draw a “line under the German past”.

Nolte went further and rejected the singularity of the Holocaust and asserted that Nazism was in fact caused by the Russian Revolution, as a desperate response to the “Bolshevik peril.” “The so-called annihilation

of the Jews under the Third Reich,” he wrote, “was a reaction or a distorted copy and not a first act or an original.”

These views would spark the Historikerstreit, or “historians’ dispute” in the late 1980s. An increasingly right-wing German nationalist Nolte came under fire from liberal and left critics such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Jürgen Habermas.

Nolte’s views were expanded in his 1987 book *The European Civil War 1917-1945: National Socialism and Bolshevism*.

As one prominent British critic of Nolte, Richard J Evans, wrote: “In *The European Civil War*, Nolte began to flirt with Holocaust denial, suggesting that it should be taken as a serious academic contribution and adopting some of the deniers’ arguments, though often in the form of innuendo. He hinted that many Jews were responsible for their own misfortunes by lending their support to communism, even though most Jews were politically liberal or conservative. He queried whether the Wannsee Conference of 1942, which organised the implementation of the Holocaust, had actually taken place.”

Nolte’s right-wing German conservatism was combined with an extreme anti-Zionism. Not content with legitimating Holocaust deniers in his works, Nolte indulged in the classic anti-semitic tropes of the “revisionists” of both the far-right and the “left”; for example,

equating Nazism with Zionism: “Zionists basically wanted something similar to the national socialists, namely to conquer and colonise a vital space.”

In a 1980 lecture he speculated that Hitler’s treatment of the Jews was a logical response to the 1939 declaration by Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann that Jews should support the British war effort. Weizmann’s letter “could lay the foundation,” he argued, in the cowardly and non-committal tone he used for contentious statements, “for the thesis that Hitler would have been justified in treating the German Jews as prisoners of war (or, more precisely, as civilian internees), thus internmenting them.”

Despite his temporary isolation in the wake of the Historikerstreit, Nolte was awarded the Konrad Adenauer prize by the Deutschland Foundation, a conservative think-tank close to the right-wing of the Christian Democratic party.

As Charles S Maier, a Harvard historian, said at the time in an interview in *The New York Times*: “The award of the prize to Nolte was a clear political statement intended to promote the view that there is no particular stigma to Nazism in the light of what some Germans now call the Red Holocaust in the Soviet Union...”

“It’s exculpatory in the German context. It’s also really scandalous.”

Bring back industrial correspondents

By Daniel Randall

“It is that time again — when bickering between Tube bosses and union kingpins bring the London Underground to a juddering halt, and the streets of the city resemble a termite mound that has been poked with a big stick.”

So began a BBC online article, by Ed Davey, which promised readers the “facts to know” about strikes on London Underground in the summer of 2015. These facts included such things as: “New York’s subway has run all night since it opened... in 1904”, and “Tube drivers are happy and wealthy, statistics suggest”.

There was hardly even a pretence of impartiality, and almost no effort to communicate what the strikes were actually about. They were written off as “bickering”, and blamed on “union kingpins”, a phrase obviously deliberately chosen to invoke criminal underworld bosses.

Other articles nodded somewhat more in the direction of attempting to report the substance of the dispute, but usually only through hackneyed phrases describing the dispute as a “row”, followed by a couple of quotes from union leaders cribbed from press releases.

These are particularly bad examples: strikes on the Tube (where I work) are held in special contempt by most media institutions. But the BBC’s coverage of Tube strikes is consistent with its wider reporting of industrial relations – disputes are “rows” or “bickering”, suggesting a kind of low-level tiff that should simply be gotten over; reporting of strikes frequently focuses on something other than the actual reason for the strike, such as its impact on service users or third parties; union leaders are “bosses”,

even though they are elected, unlike the actual bosses; strikers’ voices are rarely heard, and the workers’ case is communicated only through truncated interviews with union officials on the evening news or clipped quotes from press releases.

While BBC coverage of the closure of the Redcar steel plant earlier this year did feature some interviews with workers, the story was still presented as essentially a “business” issue.

I think it’s unrealistic to expect even a democratically-invigorated, more progressive BBC to take our side, the workers’ side, in anything like an explicit way, in its coverage of industrial relations. What the labour movement needs is its own media; we should aspire to a modern equivalent the level of media production of Chartism, the mass workers’ movement of the 19th century.

But what we can demand of the BBC, beyond a basic degree of journalistic rigour that attempts to comprehensively report the actual reasons why a strike is taking place, and what its actual demands are, is a coverage that understands industrial disputes as expressions of genuine political and economic conflict between employees and employers — that is, something more serious than “bickering” — and does not treat workers as sheep or puppets manipulated by “union kingpins”, or as walk-on cameos in stories that our really about our bosses.

How to achieve this? A start might be to reinstate the now almost extinct role of labour and industrial correspondents — print and broadcast journalists whose specific responsibility was to cover industrial relations in and of themselves. The function has mostly been absorbed into that of “business editors”, a perspective that inevitably gives primacy to the actions, interests, and perspectives of the



Report highlights passengers’ “misery” but what about the story behind the Tube strike?

employer.

Individual industrial correspondents might be right-wing or anti-union in their views, as some were when the role was common, but even then the role at least required journalists to take labour movement affairs seriously and have some degree of genuine knowledge about them. Bringing back industrial correspondents wouldn’t guarantee coverage that was sympathetic to strikes, but it would make the terrain of industrial relations, the actual activity of, and relations between, employers and employed, an aspect of mass media discourse, rather than a subsuming it into coverage merely about “business”.

The extinction of industrial correspondents was largely justified by the decline in the level of industrial conflict and the drastic shrinkage of the labour movement itself (cur-

rently around 50% of the size it was at its height in 1979). But those trends are not irreversible, and besides, BBC industrial correspondents could do more than simply report on strikes. Trade unions, despite our decline, remain the largest mass movement in Britain.

If our publicly-funded media corporation is to be in any meaningful sense “popular”, it must treat workers and our movement, the most authentically “popular”, in the literal sense, movement in the country, as conscious actors.

• An edited version of this article was published on 22 October 2015 by the Open Democracy blog, in their “100 Ideas for the BBC” series, a symposium of ideas and proposals on the future of the BBC. The symposium is online at opendemocracy.net/100ideasforthebbc

Connolly and the Easter Rising

The final part of Michael Johnson's series on the life and politics of James Connolly. The rest of the series can be found at bit.ly/connollyseries

The date of the Rising was set for Easter Sunday. However, crisis struck the rebels' plans when the arms shipment from Germany was intercepted.

When the more moderate Volunteer leadership around Eoin McNeill became aware of the IRB's plans, the orders for manoeuvres on Easter Sunday were called off at the eleventh hour, with an ad placed in the *Sunday Independent* just to make sure that the message was relayed.

McNeill's actions were, to Tom Clarke, "the blackest and greatest treachery." For Pearse, intensely aware that of the uprisings of previous generations, they were "all going all going to be arrested anyhow, and on behalf of this generation we will have to make a gesture."

CHANCE

This was echoed by Desmond Ryan: "After all our marchings and speeches what else can we do? Would any one ever listen to our oratory against if we let this chance pass?"

The resulting confusion meant that the date was moved to Easter Monday, and the numbers much diminished. Only around 1,250 turned out that morning, and the lead-

ership marched with a small contingent to seize the General Post Office on Sackville Street to begin the Rising.

It was this last-minute confusion which provides the context for Connolly's remark on that morning to the socialist William O'Brien that they were "going out to be slaughtered."

It has become common to see the Easter Rising as a deliberate attempt to enact a "blood sacrifice".

This is a view which owes much to the writings of Patrick Pearse and the posthumous commentary in the poems of William Butler Yeats — most notably in "The Rose Tree".

Yet the rest of the Rising's leadership did not agree. Connolly angrily dismissed the notion of sacrificial bloodshed as the talk of a "blithering idiot", and the initial plans for the rising were far more advanced than eventual rising in Dublin would suggest.

Connolly, for instance, had studied the Moscow uprising in 1905 and wrote on revolutionary warfare in 1915 that: "Even under modern conditions the professional soldier is badly handicapped in fighting inside a city against really determined civilian revolutionist" and, presciently, that the "fortifying of a strong building, as a pivot upon which the defence of a town or village should hinge, forms a principal object of the preparations of any defending force, whether regular army or insurrectionary."

Though they fought bravely, the Easter rebels faced the overwhelming might of the British Empire and decided to surrender after



Liberty Hall, headquarters of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union

five days of fighting to prevent further casualties. Though reaction to the Rising was mixed, it was the British decision to execute the rebels which tipped Irish opinion against the government.

Connolly, along with Seán Mac Diarmada, was amongst the last of the rebel leaders to be executed. So wounded was he from the fighting that he was carried out of the General Post Office on a stretcher, and had to be tied to a chair to face the firing squad in the yard of Kilmainham Gaol.

Yet Connolly had no regrets. On the night

before his death, he reflected to his wife: "Well, Lillie, hasn't it been a full life, and isn't this a good end?"

To his daughter Nora he gave his last public statement:

"Believing that the British Government has no right in Ireland, never had any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland, the presence, in any one generation of Irishmen, of even a respectable minority, ready to die to affirm that truth, makes that Government for ever a usurpation and a crime against human progress."

Was Connolly the "Irish Lenin?"

By way of an aside, attempts have been made by Desmond Greaves and others in the Irish Stalinist tradition to portray Connolly and an 'Irish Lenin', with assertions such as "Connolly's thought ran parallel with Lenin's ... almost phrase by phrase."

Lenin's position on the war was that "the war of 1914-18 was imperialist on the part of both sides; it was a war for the division of the world, for the partition and repartition of colonies and spheres of influence of finance capital, etc."

It was, therefore, "impossible to determine, from the standpoint of the international proletariat, the defeat of which of the two groups of belligerent nations would be the lesser evil for socialism... The conversion of the present imperialist war into a civil war is the only correct proletarian slogan." Connolly's slogan on the masthead of *The Irish Worker* and on the front of Liberty Hall from October 1914 that "We serve neither King nor Kaiser, but Ireland" implies political independence from both camps but, in the round, Connolly's position was more complex.

While much has been made in subsequent commentary about the Easter Rising of German aid, and the reference to Ireland's "gallant allies in Europe" in the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, there is no principled reason why an oppressed nation cannot exploit the divisions between rival imperialisms in the fight for self-determination.

As Brian Hanley has argued recently, however, Connolly's position went further in that He "eulogized Germany as a modern, pro-

gressive state and ignored or played down the reactionary nature of German imperialism."

For Connolly, the First World War was more narrowly, "the war of a pirate [Britain] upon the German nation", which had its roots in the fact that "other nations began quietly to challenge the unquestioned supremacy of England in the markets."

This competition, he argued, led Britain to determine "that since Germany could not be beaten in fair competition industrially, it must be beaten unfairly by organising a military and naval conspiracy against her."

In other words, while Connolly wrote that "we do not wish to be ruled by either empire", in his opposition to the war he, understandably, prioritised the fight against the British Empire.

His lesser-evilism was explicit: "the instinct of the slave to take sides with whoever is the enemy of his own particular slave-driver is a healthy instinct, and makes for freedom."

In the context of European Social-Democracy Connolly was on the extreme left, in rallying the labour movement in Ireland against the war and denouncing "the act of socialists allowing themselves to be used in the slaughter of their brothers."

He blasted the hypocrisy of the Allied powers' commitment to freedom, writing in 1914 that "Britain guaranteed the independence of Belgium. Yes, as she guaranteed the independence of Egypt, and then swallowed it up and slaughtered and imprisoned its patriot sons and daughters. Britain guaranteed

the independence of Belgium. Yes, as she guaranteed the independence of Persia, and then encouraged her Russian ally to invade it and drown its freedom in a sea of blood."

In *The Irish Worker* on 15 August 1914 he also denounced Britain's ally, Tsarist Russia, as the "most brutal foe of human liberty in the world" and would soon after draw attention to the Russian Empire's horrific anti-Semitism.

However, when writing of Germany, his formulations often echoed those of the pro-war German Social-Democratic leaders.

It was not only that the German "people are a highly civilised people, responsive to every progressive influence, and rapidly forging weapons for their own emancipation from native tyranny." The German empire, wrote Connolly, was "a homogenous empire of self-governing peoples" which contained "more of the possibilities of freedom and civilisation than" Britain's.

This logic led Connolly to go so far as to print an article from a pro-war German social-democrat interviewing the Kaiser. Connolly was left in "no doubt that" the Kaiser "understands the aims of the Radical Left in Parliament far better and has more sympathies for them than the world knows."

Lenin declared against lesser-evilism, in favour of proletarian class independence. To those "German and the Austrian Social-Democrats" who were "attempting to justify their support for the war by arguing that they are thereby fighting against Russian Tsarism", Lenin declared on behalf of the Russian Social-Democrats "that we consider



Lenin

such justification sheer sophistry" as it is the task of the Russian proletariat to overthrow Tsarism.

Whatever its merits, Connolly's position should be assessed on its own terms, not in an attempt to portray it as analogous to Lenin's. Connolly's view is explicable in the context of the Ireland's oppression by the British Empire and a healthy desire to counter act the wave of anti-German and anti-Semitic sentiment which was pulsing through British and Irish society.

However, none of this implies a need to prettify the German state, against which its population would rise up in November 1918.

Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
 - A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
 - A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
 - Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
 - A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
 - Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
 - Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
 - Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
 - Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.



If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Events

Saturday 10 September

Shut down Yarl's Wood protest
10-5, Yarl's Wood Immigration removal centre
bit.ly/2bXGfHi

Sunday 11 September

Keep Corbyn rally in Manchester
7pm, Dancehouse Theatre, 10 Oxford Road, M1 5QA
bit.ly/2coOzlo

Sunday 11 September

North London Socialist Feminist reading group
4pm, Wood Green
bit.ly/2cd6uuS

Thursday 15 September

Organising the unorganised: Workers' Liberty's London forum
7pm, Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 6AQ
bit.ly/2cwYfq4

Sunday 17 September

Refugees welcome here national demonstration
12.30pm, Park Lane, London
bit.ly/2c5KdLk

Tuesday 20 September

Haringey radical readers discuss 'Half of a yellow sun'
7pm, Big Green Bookshop, Brampton Park Rd, London N22 6BG
bit.ly/2c0TAMW

Sunday 2 October

National demonstration at Tory Party conference
Assemble 11.30am, Victoria Square, Birmingham
bit.ly/2c0Ro8m

Got an event you want listing?
solidarity@workersliberty.org

More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

For a national rail strike

By Ollie Moore

Recent and ongoing disputes across several train companies represent the most significant levels of workers' struggle in the railway industry for some time.

SOUTHERN

As *Solidarity* goes to press, guards in the RMT are preparing to strike again, on 7-8 September, to defend the safety-critical nature of their role, in a long-running dispute that has already seen several strikes.

They were due to be joined by station staff, who have separate dispute over attempts by Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), Southern's parent company, to restructure their role by collapsing distinct station roles into a generic role of "station host". Both RMT and smaller rail union TSSA called off the station staff action, after management committed to introducing the new roles only on a trial basis in eight locations.

Drivers' union Aslef called off a ballot of its Southern members a day before it was due to close, amidst fears of further legal action from rail bosses. A previous ballot, earlier this year, was declared illegal after GTR sought a High Court injunction.

VIRGIN TRAINS EAST COAST
RMT members on VTEC returned a resounding majority, on a high turnout, for strikes.

84% supported strikes and 90% backed action short of strikes, on a turnout of 62%, easily beating the stipulations of the Tories' impending Trade Union Act. VTEC wants to restructure work in its ticket offices and travel centres, threatening nearly 200 jobs. TSSA has also suggested it will ballot its members at VTEC over similar issues. RMT has demanded VTEC commits to guaranteeing no compulsory redundancies, no job cuts, and no loss of pay for any worker affected by the restructure. It has also demanded that VTEC commits to a safety-critical guard being present on every train in the future. Strikes planned for 19, 26, and 29 August were suspended, but RMT remains in dispute.

EUROSTAR

Train managers on Eurostar planned strikes for 12-15 and 27-29, with participation from both RMT and TSSA.

Although strikes were suspended, the dispute continues. It centres on on-board train managers, who are demanding that Eurostar continue to honour a 2008 agreement guaranteeing work/life balance.

RMT's strike ballot returned a 95% majority for action.

OTHER DISPUTES

There have also been strikes recently on ScotRail, where work-



Scotrail strikers earlier this year

ers struck seven times in June and July in a dispute against Driver Only Operation which secured some concessions from the company.

The past two years have also seen disputes and campaigns on Northern Rail and MerseyRail over the issue of DOO, as well as the Network Rail pay dispute, which took us to the brink of the first national rail strikes since the 1990s.

Many of the current disputes, on GTR, VTEC, and elsewhere, are linked by the issues of DOO and wider job cuts, with Train Operating Companies (TOCs), in the wake of the McNulty Report, looking to de-staff, de-skill, and downgrade, replacing skilled, safety-critical workers with increasingly casualised ways of working. The potential now exists for a nationally-coordinated rail strike across multiple companies over these issues. Unions should coordinate with that aspiration in mind, and not only by waiting for TOCs to announce the extension of DOO, but going on the offensive by demanding, at Company Council level if appropriate, that TOCs commit not to extend DOO, and immediately declaring disputes if such a commitment is not forthcoming.

The new political situation in the labour movement, with Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party and the wider left-wing surge in Labour, means that a national railworkers' strike could have an electrifying political effect. Not only would it radically reassert the visibility of organised labour as a social force, educating a new generation of activists about the central role of workplace organisation and workers' struggle as the key motor of social change, but it could also be accompanied by a national political campaign, led by the Labour Party, for public ownership of the railways.

The rail unions' joint "Action for Rail" campaign has done a reasonable job of maintaining a low level of public activity in favour of rena-

tionalisation, but, with the best will in the world, this has been limited and run mainly through unions' head offices rather than rank-and-file members at workplace or branch level. The main rail unions, all of which have links with Labour (either through direct affiliation, as in the cases of Aslef and TSSA, or through a Parliamentary Group, as with the RMT) should be demanding the Labour launches its own national campaign for public ownership, building on "Action for Rail" but developing much further, with high-profile public meetings, rallies, and a national demonstration.

Such a campaign would be the ideal bridge between rail workers and rail users: it doesn't take a genius to work out that the cuts against which workers are striking have their root cause in privatisation. A publicly-owned railway run on the basis of social need rather than the profit motive would look very different to our current one, and is in the interests both of those who work on the railway and those who use it (not that these two groups are entirely distinct, of course!).

These strikes are still largely defensive, looking to resist attacks by the bosses rather than attempting to claim new ground, but building towards nationally-coordinated strikes, supplemented and galvanised by a national political campaign for renationalisation, could help our class launch a counter-offensive.

For regular news and updates on rail campaigns and strikes follow our online blog — Off the Rails.

www.workersliberty.org/blogs/rails

Doctors' strikes resume

By Gerry Bates

Junior doctors are to strike on 5-7 October, 10-11 October, 14-18 November, and 5-9 December to stop the government imposing its new contract.

The contract, says junior doctors' committee chair Ellen McCourt, "discriminates against carers, parents, doctors with disabilities and women"; it "devalues our time" and undercuts the specialties with most difficulties.

It is linked to the government's drive for a so-called "seven-day NHS", i.e. with routine as well as emergency activities at weekends. Yet on 22 August the *Guardian* and Channel 4 News revealed leaked Department of Health documents in which the government's own planners reckon that the health service has "too few staff and too little money" to deliver that plan.

The government has already tried to impose a new contract. Earlier industrial action by junior doctors led to some improvements, but on 5 July a ballot of junior doctors rejected those improvements as inadequate by 58%-42%, despite their organisation, the British Medical Association, earlier endorsing the revised contract.

After delay and discussion, the BMA called a first new strike for 12-16 September. On 5 September the BMA suspended that strike, explaining that NHS England (the umbrella administrative, though not employing, authority for the NHS) had said that the schedule gave not enough time to organise emergency cover during the strike.

The October, November, and December strikes are still on track. Rapid and strong action is necessary because some junior doctors under the new contract starts in October 2016, and the rest are scheduled to follow bit by bit up to October 2017. The BMA and local NHS campaigns should organise protests and demonstrations to replace the September strike dates.

LABOUR

Labour movement activists mobilised around the Labour are leadership election and Labour Party conference

The fight to save the NHS passes not only through getting better Labour Party leaders and policy, but also through the courageous action on the ground of the junior doctors.

After the announcement of the strikes junior doctors faced a con-



certed smear campaign by the press and the government, which knocked the confidence of some.

Momentum groups and Labour Party organisations should give support by sending messages and delegations to the junior doctors at their local hospitals, and by bringing numbers to any demonstrations the junior doctors organise.

Those messages, delegations, and demonstrations do not have to be delayed until October. They should start straight away.



No more zero-hours

By Gemma Short

Campaigners have targeted Sports Direct ahead of the Annual General Meeting of the company due to be held on 7 September.

The company AGM will consider a trade union sponsored resolution which calls for an independent investigation into the use of zero-hours contracts in Sports Direct.

Campaigners protested at Sports Direct stores in Grimsby, Manchester, Liverpool, Eastbourne and south London on Saturday 3 September holding banners reading #SportsDirectShame and "stand with migrant workers".

On Tuesday 6 September it was

announced by Sports Direct that they will be offering guaranteed hours contracts to most of its workers (though not workers employed through agencies). They also announced that a full-time nurse and welfare officer will be employed at the Shirebrook site (where conditions have been compared to a Victorian workhouse), a confidential system for reporting sexual harassment, and fewer searches of staff.

Campaigning groups greeting this announcement with cautious welcome, arguing it shows that the impact of unions campaigns but that workers will not be fully protected in Sports Direct until a union is organised in each workplace.

UCU consults on HE pay offer

By a UCU member

University bosses have made a revised offer to settle a dispute over pay, casualisation and the gender pay gap.

However it is largely an offer of talks on casual contracts and the pay gap, with little promise of action, while the planned pay increase remains just 1.1% with a slightly larger uplift for the very lowest paid.

The offer follows three days of strike action by UCU members earlier this year. The UCU leadership has promised consultation with branches before a decision on next steps in October. Unison, meanwhile, has been balloting members in Higher Education with a recommendation to reject the offer. Its ballot closes on 19 September.

The employers will be hoping that anxiety about the impact of Brexit on the sector will encourage workers to settle. Employers' organization UCEA has advised its members to prepare to impose the 1.1%.

Activists need to point out the lack of any real action on either casualisation or the pay gap, that 1.1% does nothing to catch up years of effective pay cuts, and that the fall in the value of the pound post-Brexit means a big cut in the overseas spending value of British wages (an important issue for a workforce that includes so many international staff).



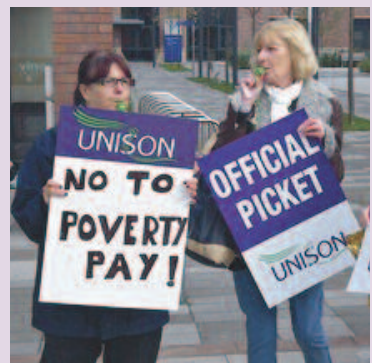
Unison ballots HE workers

By Peggy Carter

Unison members in Higher Education are being balloted for strikes over a 1.1% pay offer.

With the threat of a ballot employers expanded their draft offer but there was no movement on the 1.1% pay increase for the majority of staff. Unison says that pay freezes, and below inflation pay offers since 2009 have left workers many thousands of pounds worse off this year. Meanwhile university vice-chancellors received an average 6.1% pay increase last year.

As with the UCU, Unison is also campaigning on increasing casualisation and the gender pay-gap. Unfortunately Unison did not bal-



lot members to strike at the same time as UCU members earlier in the year. If UCU members reject their latest offer, strikes between the two sections of the workforce should be coordinated.

The ballot closes on 19 September.

Hundreds march to save A&E

By Charlotte Zalens

Hundreds of people marched through Huddersfield on Sunday 4 September against the closure of their local A&E.

As previously reported in *Solidarity*, Huddersfield Royal Infirmary A&E is scheduled for closure, meaning the nearest A&E for local people will be 7 miles away in Halifax.

The campaign against the closure has staged several demonstrations, gathered a lot of celebrity support, and gathered 63,000 signatures on a petition

against the closure.

Karl Deitch, from the Hands off HRI group, said we "won't take it lying down".

"We're not stopping, they need to take a look and think — we have to go to a plan B, we need another alternative,"



London bus workers strike again

By Gemma Short

Bus workers at London bus operator Tower Transit struck again for 24 hours on Tuesday 6 September.

The strike comes after the second of two strike days over the bank holiday weekend in August were suspended to "allow the company to reflect" and re-start negotiations.

Three London bus depots are involved in the strike, covering 28

different bus routes. Workers are fighting the imposition of roster changes which leave them out of pocket, as well as non-payment of overtime when working on rest days.

The bus workers' union Unite says that "Tower Transit could resolve this dispute with the stroke of a pen and by committing to genuine change in managerial practice rather than confrontational brinkmanship."



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ORGANISE TO STOP THE PURGE!

By Sacha Ismail

The Labour Party's full-time office machine, much of it inherited from the Blair-Brown era, is running its own campaign to

neutralise, indeed if possible to change, the Labour leadership contest.

Large numbers — no-one knows how many — have been summarily expelled or suspended

in recent months, including Bakers' Union general secretary Ronnie Draper. In addition, something like 100,000 members (again, no-one knows) have yet to get ballot papers or how-to-vote emails: this is explained as "administrative difficulties".

The full-time office machine did the same during the 2015 leadership contest — expelling or excluding an estimated 40,000 people — and has continued one-by-one expulsions, mostly on grounds of alleged association with Workers' Liberty or Socialist Appeal, ever since.

The Stop the Purge campaign has been relaunched and has a meeting, with suspended Harrow councillor Pamela Fitzpatrick speaking, in London on 7 September.

Stop the Purge has launched a new statement against expulsions and for democracy in the party. It was signed by over two hundred activists, including many prominent figures, in its first half day.

It has also promoted a motion on these issues for Labour Party conference.

Workers' Liberty will do everything we can to build the campaign — both because we have had members expelled and because an open regime is important for the future of the Labour Party.

We want to make the witch-hunters feel they cannot operate with impunity.

Corbyn and McDonnell are, understandably, focused on winning the leadership election. But stopping the purge is both the right thing to do for a leadership that has loyalty to its supporters, and necessary in order to take on the bureaucracy that has consistently undermined them.

We will be demanding from Corbyn and McDonnell a push to stop the purging, reinstatement of those expelled for being left-wing activists, and the transfer of membership disputes and disciplinary matters from the Compliance Unit to an accountable body that will

operate with clear rules and due process.

Beyond that, the party machine needs to be purged. General Secretary Iain McNicol should go.

The left on the NEC should work with the leadership to take control of the situation.

In addition to Stop the Purge, another campaign, Labour Against the Witch-Hunt, has been set up, mainly by activists accused of anti-semitism.

Some accusations of anti-semitism have been cynically and opportunistically used by the right and the bureaucracy to attack the left. The problem is that many on the left are driven by their "absolute anti-Zionist" politics to deny that there is a problem at all, and to defend the indefensible.

As it fights the witch-hunt, the left must have clean hands on anti-semitism.

• Sign the Stop the Purge statement: bit.ly/stpurge

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